

Nils O. Braaten (Broten)¹ and Anna, Charter Members of West Norway Lake Lutheran Church

Grave markers² at the above-mentioned church show Nels O. Broten, June 29, 1829 to Oct 6, 1911 and Anna Malina Broten, Jan 1, 1840 to May 31, 1925. Norwegian records, below, give slightly different birth dates.

From Festskrift³:

Nils Braaten, born in Hallingdal. Came to Clayton County, Iowa 1856, Rice County Minnesota 1858, and to Norway Lake 1865. Married with Anna Olson, from Stavanger.

The immigration date is more likely 1858, as shown in the partly matching record⁴ from the Nes Church in Hallingdal, Buskerud, Norway in which Nils Olsen Liabraaten age 27, Gjertrud Colbjørnsdatter 33, Colbjørn 5, Ole 3 departed from that church on 8 April 1858. The destination given was "Amerika." (Note also the difference in spouse's name.)

Gjertrud, identified as married with Nils Olsen Braaten, died in Goodhue County, MN in December of 1861. (This is known from an ELCA record from the Holden Church in that County⁵.) This shows that the family that left Nes Church in 1858 reached Minnesota.

Apparently Nils remarried, as ELCA baptism records from the same church show Nils Olsen Braaten and Anne Agesdatter as parents of Aage Andreas, who was born 8 Dec 1864.

The following is believed to be more accurate birth information: Nils Olsen Braaten was born on 22 July 1829, as seen in his baptism record from Nes Church in Hallingdal, Norway. His parents were Ole Østensen and Gunil xxxx. Anna Malena Agesdatter was born⁶ 2 Jan 1841 in Rogaland, Norway and was christened at the Jelsa Parish, near Stavanger. Her parents were Aage Olsen and Anna Johnsdatter.

Nils Oleson (age 40) appears in the 1870 census⁷ of Benson (then part of Chippewa County) Minnesota. Others in the household were: Anna (30), Colbin (19), Olie (16), Knute (10), Olie (7), Andrew (5), John E. (6/12), Gunnull (3). The last 5 were born in MN, the others in Norway. Although the ages do not match very well, Colbin (Colbjørn) and the first Olie (Ole) are probably Nils' children from his first marriage, while Knute and the second Olie are Anne's from an earlier relationship.

Nils Olsen Braaten and Anne (or Anna) Agesdatter appear as parents in ELCA baptism records for the Norway Lake church. The children baptised were Anne, born 16 Mar 1872 and Halvor, born 16 Jul 1874. These baptisms predated the West Norway Lake Church so they were done in the Old Log Church.

Nils O. Broten (age 46) and Anna (35) appear in the 1875 census of Kerkhoven Township, Swift County. Others in the household were: Knut (16), Ole (14), Andreas (8), Gunhild (7), John (6), Anne (3), Halvor (0). The parents were born in Norway, all children in MN.

Nils, Anna and family appear in the Hayes Township, Swift County censuses of 1880, 1885, 1900 and 1910. (The names and ages are not fully consistent between the censuses, but there is now doubt that it is the same family.) The 1880 census includes, as a household member, Knut Knutson, age 20, identified as a stepson. This further indicates that Knut is Anna's son from a previous relationship.

The 1900 census is particularly informative, stating that:

- Nils and Anna had been married for 35 years.
- The immigration year for both Nils and Anna was 1858.
- Anna is the mother of 10 children, 8 living.

The neighboring household was headed by Andrew N. Broten (35), obviously their son Aage Andreas.

This report was prepared by Earl O. Knutson. Assistance from Jackie Marler, Genealogist for Hallingslag, is acknowledged for uncovering much of the information presented here.

1 The name Braaten was used in most church records, while Broten was used in most census records.

2 Findagrave.com.

3 *Festskrift - En Fremstilling at det Kirkelige Arbeide Norway Lake fra 1862-1916." Ved Pastorene Mons Sotendahl og N.J. Njus. Partial translation by Debbie Boe at http://www.debbiesgenealogy.com/Norway_Lake_Lutheran_Churches_1862-1916.htm.*

4 Except as noted, all Norwegian church records were accessed via media.digitalarkivet.no

5 Except as noted, all ELCA church records cited here were accessed via ancestry.com

6 This church record was accessed via familysearch.org

7 This census record was accessed via familysearch.org.